# A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Just a short note to our readers. Renegade is real busy getting ready for the convention season, as I write this. Because of this, I haven't really found the time to write a **real** editorial. But, just to let you know you're not forgotten I'm sending this note to the printers. If you can make it to one of the conventions listed below, we would love to see you. I promise that next month's editorial (which I am already working on) will have more to it. See you soon!

Deni

# RENEGADE APPEARANCES JULY 4-6 CHICAGO COMICCON

Michael Cherkas (The Silent Invasion)
Larry Hancock (The Silent Invasion)
Max Collins (Ms. Tree)
Terry Beatty (Ms. Tree)
Rick Hoberg (Eternity Smith)
Dennis Mallonee (Eternity Smith)

Joe Judt (Strata)
Ray Murtaugh (Strata)
Jim Brozman(Strata)
David Darrigo (Wordsmith)
Bob Burden (Flaming Carrot)
Deni Loubert (Publisher)

JULY 25-27 ATLANTA FANTASY FAIR
Rick Hoberg (Eternity Smith) Joe Sina

Dennis Mallonee (Eternity Smith)

ith) Bob Burden (Flaming Carrot)

# JULY 31 - AUG 3 SAN DIEGO COMICCON

Michael Cherkas (The Silent Invasion) Larry Hancock (The Silent Invasion) Joe Judt (Strata) Ray Murtaugh (Strata) Jim Brozman (Strata) Max Collins (Ms. Tree) Terry Beatty (Ms. Tree) David Darrigo (Wordsmith)
Barb Rausch (Neil & Vicky)
Bob Burden (Flamming Carrot)
Dan Day (Cases of Sherlock Holmes)
Dennis Mallonee (Eternity Smith)
Rick Hoberg (Eternity Smith)
Deni Loubert (Publisher)

Joe Sinardi (Maxwell Mouse Follies)

Please note that there will be a cocktail party at the Golden Apple Comic Shop, 7711 Melrose Ave. in Los Angeles on Tuesday August 5th. It will be hosted by The Golden Apple and Renegade Press as an informal get together for fans to talk to the artists and to see how a company like Renegade survives. Everyone from Renegade will be there (with the exception of R.G. Taylor from Wordsmith). It will run from 7-9 p.m., and probably spill over into the nearest bar, if I know Renegade. Everyone is welcome to come. Bring your friends, even if they don't read comics!!

# MATRICE

Published twelve times a year by Renegade Press, 10408 Oxnard Street, North Hollywood, CA., 91606. MS. TREE is a work of fiction. All the characters and events portrayed herein are fictional, and any resemblance to real people or incidents is coincidental. All contents @ 1985 Max Collins and Terry Beatty Any inquiries regarding use of the characters, images, or situations depicted should be addressed to Der.i Loubert. No unauthorized reproduction allowed except for review or other Journalistic purposes. Advertising rates furnished on request. Printed in Canada by Preney Print and Litho Inc., Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

NO. 30

**JUNE 1986** 

# PUBLISHER: Deni Loubert

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Renegade Logo Design by Dave Roman



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# MATRIE "THE OTHER CHEEK"

# THE KILLING LINE

WOULD I

WORK FOR MICHAEL TREE,
THE INFAMOUS FEMALE
"PRIVATE EYE," THOUGH
THAT'S A TERM I'VE NEVER
HEARD MER USE.

HE'S BEEN SICK.

MENTALLY SO. SHE'S
BACK TODAY, AT THE
FFICE, BRIGHT AND EARLY
FIRST TIME IN MONTHS

HE'S CHANGED.



Chapter Three

I'M HER EXECUTIVE AGSISTANT. I USED TO BE HER SECRETARY, AND I STILL AM, REALLY. BUT THE TITLE AND MONEY ARE BETTER NOW.



NOT SO FORMAL, EFFIE. CALL ME "MICHELLE" - IN A WORLD OF MEN, WE GIRLS HAVE TO STICK TOGETHER, DON'T WE?







"WHAT DO YOU MEAN ?"

"I SENT HIM AWAY — TO LIVE WITH HIS GRANDMOTHER IN A SMALL, PEACEFUL LITTLE TOWN, UPSTATE."

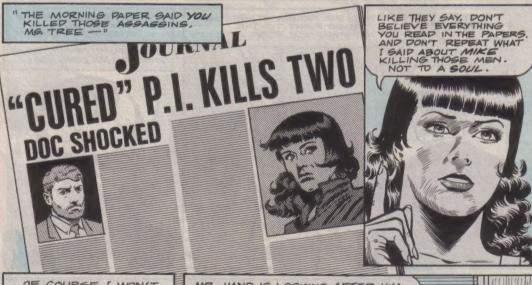






"EFFIE, I'M QUITE SURE. YOU SEE, MIKE KILLED YESTERDAY, ... TWO MEN DIED AT HIS HANDS. THE WORLD I LIVE IN—THE WORLD I CREATED FOR MYSELF—16 SO HATEFUL, SO WOLENT, IT'S TAINTED EVEN AN INNOCENT LIKE MIKE,







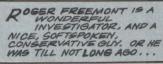


















WRONG TO SPEND YOUR LIFE PURSUING THE HUMAN LICE WHO KILLED YOUR HUSBAND - MY FRIEND -



NOW I KNOW BETTER, THE MHERTAS OF THIS WORLD DESERVE WHAT YOU DISHED OUT, SO COLDLY.





"THEY FORCED ME TO KILL HER, MS. TREE, A WOMAN I LOVED — A WOMAN I'LL ALWAYS LOVE, BLINDLY, YES; BUT ALWAYS. THEY PUT ME IN A POSITION WHERE I HAD TO DROP THE HAMMER ON HER,





DAN GREEN IS THE YOUNGEST INVESTIGATOR ON THE STAFF - BUIL HE'S BEEN THROUGH MORE THAN A COUPLE LIFETIMES OF TROUBLE AND GRIEF.





COME ALONG, EFFIE MY DEAR, WHILE DR. GREEN PERFORMS SOME SHOCK THERAPY.





CRAZY? NOT ANYMORE, I'VE
PINALLY COME TO MY SENGES,
I'VE GONE OVER THE CASELOAD FOR
THE PAST SIX WEEKS... YOU'VE
FARMED EVERY PAYING JOB OUT
TO MIKE MIST, WHAT IN GOD'S
NAME HAVE YOU
PEOPLE BEEN
DOING WITH
YOUR TIME?

WE'VE BEEN FOLLOWING UPON THE SENATOR PALMA CASE — WHICH WAS YOUR IDEA, REMEMBER ?

WE'RE THAT CLOSE TO NAILING THAT BASILING THAT BASILING THAT MURDER OF HIS MISTRESS!

"YOUR EYE WITNESS, CLAUPE, HAS FLOWN AWAY SOMEWHERE,"
PAN SAID, "BUT WE'VE GOT
STRONG CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE, INCLUDING OTHER EYE WITNESSES WHO DIDN'T SEE THE MURDER, BUT WHO DID SEE THE SENATOR AND THE GIRL TOGETHER THAT NIGHT-DESPITE PALMA'S TRUMPED-UP ALIB!
TO THE CONTRARY!"















"IT TURNED YOUR STEPSON INTO A KILLER — YOU DID THAT, MG, TREE, BY NOT TAKING RESPONSIBILITY YOURSELF., IF THAT GUN HAD BEEN IN YOUR HAND, MIKE WOULDN'T HAVE CROSSED THE KILLING LINE."

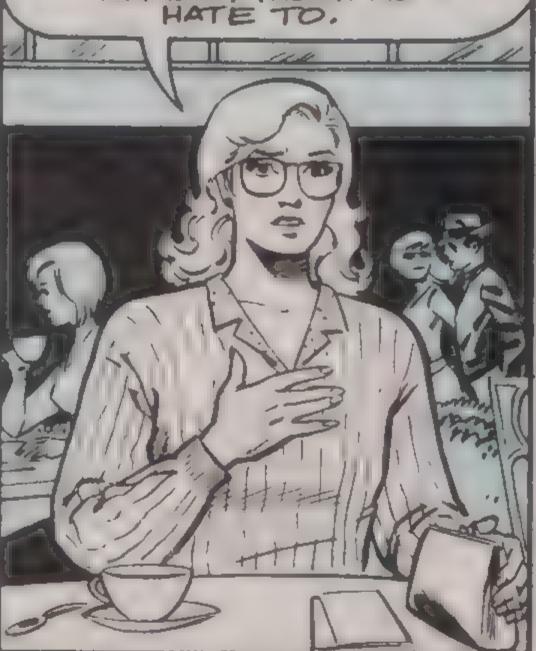


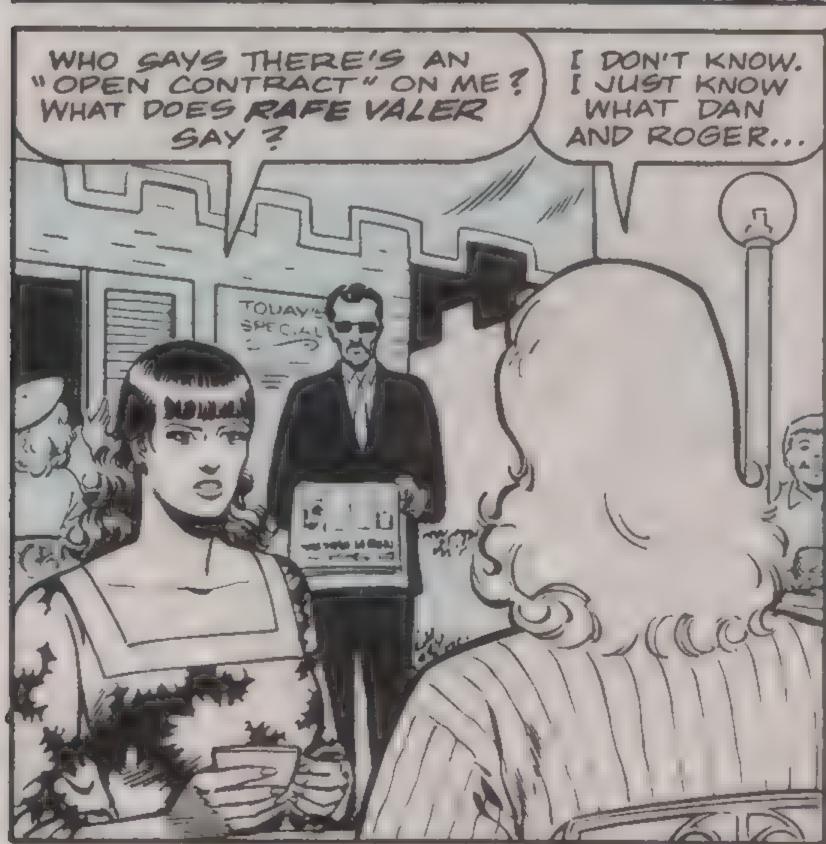


MY EMPLOYER ASKED ME OUT TO LUNCH (WHICH DESCRIBED MY EMPLOYER PRETTY WELL, I THOUGHT - "OUT TO LUNCH").

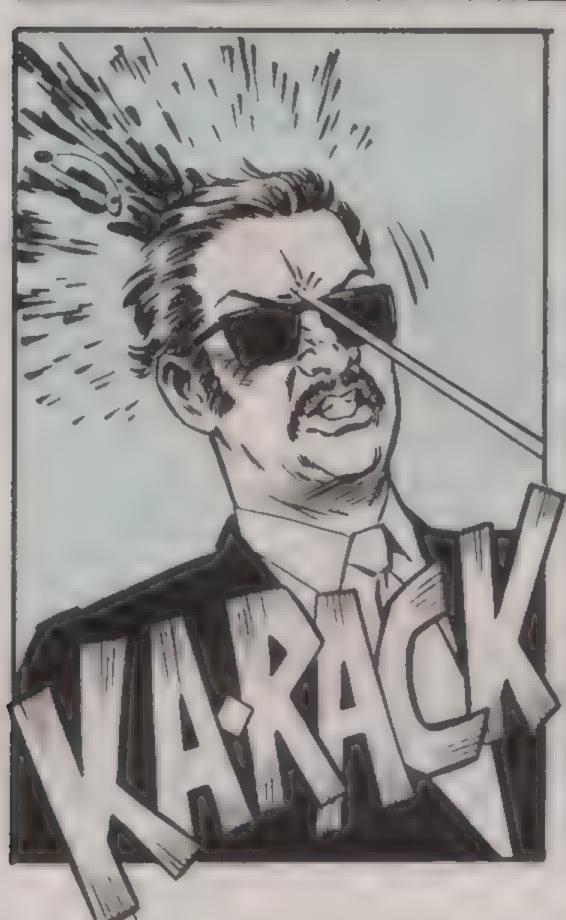


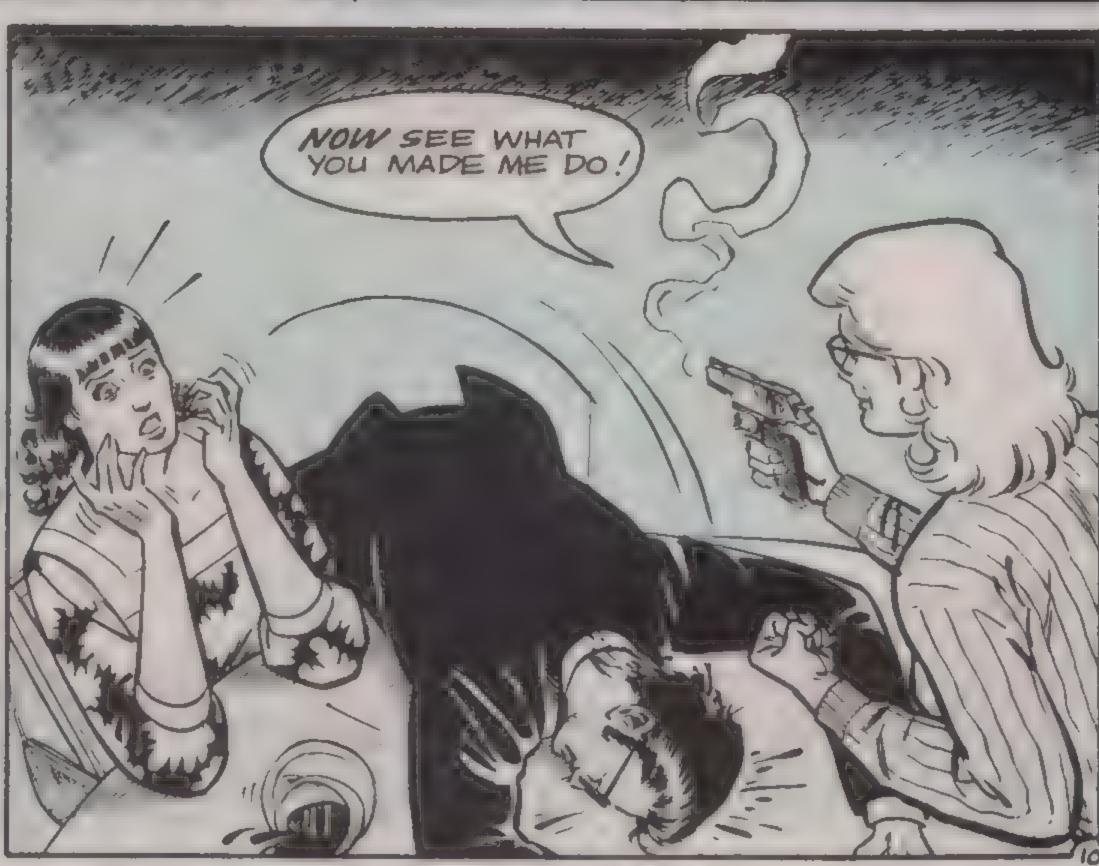
BUT THERE IS AN
OPEN CONTRACT OUT ON
YOU - I'VE TAKEN TO
CARRYING A GUN IN MY
PURSE, MUCH AS I
HATE TO.











CONTINUED IN THIS ISSUE -



Address all letters of comment to:

# SWAK

P. O. BOX 1007 MUSCATINE, IA 52761

### **MESSAGE FROM MAX**

As you have no doubt noticed, the cover price of this month's issue is \$2 Our \$1.70 days are a thing of the past. We regret doing this, but hope our discriminating audience (that's you) will put up with the financial inconvenience. The facts are these: we wanted to upgrade the quality of the paper; and upgrade the quality of Collins and Beatty's pay checks. The latter isn't greed - it's necessary to keep the MS. TREE boat afloat We are currently one of the top selling non-full color books on the market; but X-MEN spills more copies than we sell. We are often described as a "cult favorite." And a writer (or a comic book) having a cult following has been accurately described as "about seven readers short of being able to make a living." We regret the price hike, but it was necessary.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find a ballot for the Comics Buyer's Guide Fan Awards for 1985. We encourage you to fill out this ballot and send it in - photocopy it (or type a facsimile) if you don't wish to tear a page out of this soon-to-be-priceless periodical. While we wouldn't dream of encouraging you to vote for li'l ole us, we will be so bold as to point out that the MS. TREE issues eligible for consideration on this ballot are numbers 15 through (and including) 24 (and the 3-D issue) In the "Favorite Limited Comic-Book Series or Graphic Novel" category, THE COLD DISH (The Files of Ms. Tree Vol. 2) is eligible; so is the mini-series THE PI'S. If you choose to vote for a MS. TREE story in the category "Favorite Comic-Book Story," we would suggest voting for the entire continuity, rather than a single issue (MS. TREE stories published in 1985 include "Runaway," "Muerta Means Death," and "Right to Die" - "Skin Deep" concluded in '85 and "Prisoner Cell Block Hell" began in '85). Since a relatively low-circulation book like MS. TREE is, frankly, unlikely to win in any category, we would also call your attention to the "Phil Seuling Award for Favorite Direct-Sale-Only Title." We encourage you to vote for your favorites, whatever they might be, but especially encourage you to support with your votes those smaller circulation, direct-only titles you admire.

Please note, however, that ballots are to be mailed by June 30 - and this issue goes on sale about a week before that We checked with CBG editor Don Thompson, who advised us to run this ballot here despite its lateness. Don assured us that ballots will be given some lee-way - at least a week past the stated deadline. If you wish to vote, then, we'd suggest you ignore the calendar but vote immediately.

I would also like to mention that I'll be scripting fill-in issues of upcoming BATMAN issues#402 and #403 Issue #402 is drawn by Jim Starlin, a thrill for an aging fanboy

like me Artist on #403 hasn't been set yet but keep you posted in SWAK. This marks my first scripting for one of the major comic-book companies. We nobe the work on BATMAN will lead more readers to a certain cult favorite."

On a more serious, even tragic note. I must mark the passing of a friend and partner of mine in the world of comics For better than three years. John Looner has been the able assistant - the co-artist, really - on the DICK TRACY comic strip. His father, distinguished policial cartoonist Dick Locher, has been my artist on TRACY since the death of Rick Fletcher in 1983. Dick had been grooming John to eventually take over the art on the strict John, a fine draftsman with a strong design sense was doing a lot of work on the strip, particularly on the dares on the current continuity, about Tracy in Russia John was doing some of his finest work. Not long ago - just a few weeks ago, as I write this - the very first assistant on the DICK TRACY strip, Dick Moores, of GASOL NE ALLEY fame, passed away after a long, active and productive life. And now, unbelievably, the most recent assistant on the strip has joined Dick, Rick and Chet John Locher, 25, died on Sunday, May 18, 1986, after a brief illness John's contribution to the TRACY strip was considerable, but he was a great guy, as well, and I will miss him not just as a hardworking partner, but as a valued friend

John was a MS TREE reader, he always got a kick out of the book, knowing that it was where I went to do the kinds of controversial stories and violent action that we couldn't get away with in TRACY. He once commented (in a letter to me) about MS. Tree herself by saying she was "a pretty tough cookie. I think I may have gone out on a blind date with her in college."

Some of John's work on the TRACY strip is currently on view in Ken Pierce's TRACY'S WARTIME MEMORIES trade paperback, and not long ago, Dragon Lady Press published a "Best of the Tribune Co" magazine (issue #2) featuring a Rick Fletcher drawn stroy and one drawn by the Lochers (featuring some of Dick and John's best work together, I think) Ken plans several more volumes. featuring art work by the Lochers, and Dragon Lady Press will be doing at least one more magazine collection drawn by the Lochers Also, Dragon Lady Press will also be publishing the complete Collins/Fletcher DICK TRACY in trade paperback. I hope such republications will continue as the years progress, keeping alive the vital contributions both Rick and John made to the continuing novel that is DICK TRACY Readers of MS TREE are encouraged to seek these publications out, and may feel free to use SWAK as a forum regarding them

Dear Max & Terry

I'm a newcomer to the world of MS. TREE, having just picked up the P.I.'s, & MS. TREE#'s 22-26. Exercising great will power I have only read the letter columns, & will not read the stories until I have the whole set. So why write? Glad you asked!

Funny way to celebrate a birthday, writing my 1st letter to my new comic interest. Well, if it's one thing I've never been accused of being, it's normal.

To read some reviews lately you would think "Marvel" was a word used to scare the heck out of naughty boys & girls.

Until recently I've only collected 2 Epic titles & some of the old Marvel Horror titles. I don't care for Superheroes except as they interact with Swamp Thing. Then I saw DAKOTA NORTH. I like mysteries & detectives. I used to read & collect

the Hardy Boys & Nancy Drew books with a passion until I discovered Star Trek

After reading this radical departure from the Marvel mainstream, I ran for my Overstreet & discovered a goldminel Detectives Inc., Nathanial Dusk, among the most notable. Then I saw the MS. TREE listing & was curious. So what if it was no longer a color comic like I'm used to. An excellent comic is an excellent comic even if it's pink with purple dots. The preview in CBG only whetted my appetite to learn more. Within a month or so I'll have completed my set, read each

tale & be able to give a more knowledgeable opinion on the subject

I can already say that without a doubt, like Swamp Thing, your letter column is one of the most intelligent &

Terry for showing us that Ms. Tree is willing to do so.

Robert Sodavo, FAIRFIELD, CT

The recent comments by T. E. Pouncey, & the always entertaining Mr. Maple in issues 22 & 25 along with your related comments were items that many more readers than do so should read on the subject of letter writers.

Compared to Maple & a few others that come to mind I'm new at this sort of thing. So new that I have yet to become bored by seeing another of my letters in print. In fact, I think I'll always feel a great sense of pride & accomplishment when one of my letters is deemed worthy & intelligent enough to be printed. Would you believe that several times I've been in the embarrassing situation of autographing a comic!

Unlike the 2 distinguished persons above I can't offer you a certificate, plaque, or even a trophy for publishing my letters. All I can offer is the deep sense of accomplishment some people seem to get when they either spell or pronounce my rather easy name without my assistance

Until next time keep up the good work, & don't despair, Marvel is still good for something. After all it led me to your book didn't it?

Kiril Kundurazieff, POMONA, CA

Well, er, gee, Kiril - we hope you like the comic book as much as you like the letters page; and if it turns out you don't like the book, why not keep buying MS. TREE, anyway? You wouldn't be the first who felt our letters column is worth the price of an issue. Speaking of which, I would like to thank all of you out there, who have made SWAK one of the most talked-about columns of its kind in the world of comics. My wiseguy responses no doubt have something to do with that, but mainly it's been you. Keep writing - I will expand the column to four pages whenever necessary, to keep up with the flow.

## Dear Max:

I was actually quite amused by Michael Zmuda's comments in issue #26 about my letter (which appeared in issue #21). The reason for my amusement is because he accuses me of something I have often accused others of doing, that is to say confusing fact and fiction. Yes Mike, I know (all too much) the difference between the two.

In NBC's St. Eisewhere Boomer's three year-old son was kidnapped, and then found the next week. The drama was handled quite well, but it was, again, merely fiction. You see Mike, in real life Boomer and Ms. Tree probably wouldn't have found their children...alive at any rate. In real life, more children are lost and never found, than are those who are lost, and then found (the number of children who are found alive, and further, unscarred by the events of their kidnapping is, I would point out, fewer still). In fiction the "good guy" generally wins; for if the "bad guy" was the usual victor, who would read? If I want to depress myself, I'll read the paper.

Yes Ms. Tree is fiction. Yes, the violence is not "real." Yes, I can distinguish the difference between reality and comics. And yes, my response to the story was very hardline. I still stand by it. Does that make me unbalanced, or disturbed? I don't believe so.

In 25+ years of comic reading, the ending to MS. TREE #17 was the single most violent ending to a comic I have ever read. It touched me, down deep inside, where it counts. After reading that story I sat stock still and listened to my heart roar. I felt a chill at the base of my spine, and the hair on my neck stood on end. I was in awe. These days it takes a good deal to get my attention, especially with a comic book.

To you Mike, I'll posit a question I once put before Mike Tiefenbacher editor of the late, lamented Comics Reader. If you walked into a room and found a man raping your wife (or girlfriend or son or daughter) how would you react? Would you attempt to appeal to the rapist's "better nature"? Would you reason with him by saying, "Like hay man, that's like very anti-social behavior, and like I really object to it, you know"? Or would your reaction be more akin to Ms. Tree's?

I thought so.

So would mine, and as I said then, I believe in the sanctity of life. My reaction to the ending of MS. TREE #17 offends every Christian ethic I ever learned. I would still have "rehabilitated" Billy Bob with the business end of a .44. And that scares me.

Last year my father prevented a man from stealing two small children from a car parked on our town's main drive. The kidnapping attempt occurred in broad daylight on a busy street. That scares me too. I might be over-reacting to a fictional story Mike, but not without just cause. Children need to be protected from maniacs like Billy Bob. I applaud Max and

Dear Deni, Max & Terry, MS. TREE nos. 24 & 25 were both on the shelves when I arrived for a short visit to the U.S., so I've just read the whole of "Prisoner Cell Block Hell" in one sitting. This is a welcome further exploration of the effects of Michael's violent lifestyle on her future. It was inevitable that she would end up in jail eventually, even if only for a little while. I've read in the Amazing Heroes preview that she'll be spending the next few issues in a mental institution. I don't know what sort of research you've gone into for this one, but I'm looking forward to your portrayals of life inside such a place, and maybe a look at what leads someone to end up in there. But I digress ....

As I said, Ms. Tree's time inside was inevitable, and, I think, a necessary event if she is to learn to think about the ramifications of her actions, both on her (she's done some time, even if whilst awaiting trial) and on others, as she saw whilst confronting the girlfriend and mother of a man caught in the crossfire (TM and all rights reserved, Marv....no, that's wrong!) of one of her gun battles. To an extent, Wendy is right in blaming Michael for the man's death, and Michael must see that. Also, Michael's thoughts on the medal she deserved for killing Muerta need some self-examination on her part which I guess she'll be forced into her next, only slightly different form of internment. I think it's a little too easy for us to forget why she got like this in the first place; but it's also too easy for her to excuse her behaviour on similar grounds. I'm not sure, but I think there is some difference in shooting someone in cold blood, and in more of an immediate self defense situation, where the gun is being pointed at you at the same time, instead of earlier or through some organization.

As far as the scenes inside the prison go, the characters seemed a little stereotyped, a little like those out of "women's prison" films. My studies have taken me into such a place, and most of the people I met weren't really as depicted, although there again I never got to see the cell block hierarchy. (Again, where did you do your research?) But the characters certainly made for a good story. You'll no doubt get many comments about the search and shower scenes. I think both were necessary, and the search of Michael when she arrived at the prison was an immediate brutal reminder of what she was getting into. All stories about women's prisons seem to have shower scenes of some sort, and I suppose that this was a fairly natural place to hold the murder attempt. The strategically placed towels, hands, etc., always look a little like something out of a lower quality TV soap, but here I think you did a good job of keeping within your editorial policy without looking too deliberate.

A few quick parting comments. I loved the last couple of covers. The single tones look just as good as two, especially with the blues but less so with the reds. And Deni, I notice Titan is missing from your list of distributors again. Does this mean no Ms. Tree's in England again? I'm already laden down with copies of our missing issues for friends!

Malcom Bourne (on NYC visit)

As I've said in a previous SWAK, Malcolm, "Prisoner Cell Block Hell" was meant, to a degree, to be an homage (there's that word again) to all those sleazy but fun "girls in prison" B pictures - and a specific homage to the brilliant Australian soap opera, PRISONER CELL BLOCK H. God, I miss that show. Anyway, the research for the story was done several years ago - for a novel of mine - at a local jail. So, stereotypes or not, much of the nuts-and-bolts of the story was based on the specific procedures - and the look of - a real American jail in the state of Illinois.

Dear Max and Terry:

I'm not writing a long letter about the deep social commentary in MS. TREE and the issues the book raises. I just enjoy the darn thing! When it seems like my comic book order must shrink every month due to finances, MS. TREE is always at the top of my must buys.

This book is different from anything else on the market. It's a refreshing change from superheroics (which I like also) to sit ORIGINAL MS. TREE ARTWORK FOR SALE. PAGES ARE \$50.00 each, except those marked with an \*. Number of \* indicates number of panels per page that are pasted-up photocopies (usually flashback panels or scene-setting exteriors). \*=\$30.00 \*\*=\$25.00 \*\*\*=\$15.00

Make check or money order payable to: Terry Beatty, PO Box 1007, Muscatine, IA 52761 (A few covers available- please inquire)

These are one-of-a-kind items - please list alternates.

# DEATH DO US PART

Chapter
One:5,7,8
Two:1,5
Three:2,4
Four:4,5,8
Five:6,8
Six:5,7\*
Seven:2,5,6\*\*

# THE COLD DISH

Chapter
One:3,4,7,8
Two:2,3,4,7,8
Three:1,5
Four:5
Pive:1,3,4,5,9
Six:2,4,5,7
Seven:3,4,6\*,8
Eight:2,4,6
Nine:4
Ten:4,5,8

# DEADLINE

Chapter
One:3,7,8\*,9\*\*,10
Two:7\*,9
Three:2\*\*,3,4,5
Four:2,3,5,7,8,10
Five:3,4
Six:1,2,3,5\*\*,6,10
Seven:5\*\*,7,8,9\*
Eight:1,8

# SKIN DEEP Chapter One:1,2,6,8,9 Two:5,7,8

Three:6\*,7,8,9 Four:2,3\*,4\*,6,7

# RUNAWAY

Chapter
One: 1,2,3,4,7,8
Two:1,7\*
Three:3,5,9,10
Four:4,6

# MUERTA MEANS DEATH

Chapter
One:3,4,5\*,10
Two:1
Three:4,9
Four:3,4,5,9\*\*\*
Five:2,4\*,8\*,9\*
Six:3\*,4,10\*
Seven:2\*,3\*,4,6,7\*
Eight:1\*,2\*,5,7\*\*,8\*\*\*

# RIGHT TO DIE

Chapter
One:1,2,3\*,4,7,9
Two:4,6\*,7,8,9
Three:3,6\*,8,10\*
Four:2,7\*

# PRISONER CELL BLOCK HELL

Chapter
One:1,2\*,7,9,10\*
Two:1,2,7
Three:2\*\*,3,6,7\*
Four:2,5,7\*

# HEROINE WITHDRAWAL

Chapter
One:7,8,9\*,10\*
Two:3,4\*,5,9\*,10\*
Three:2\*,4\*,6,7,10\*\*
Four:1,2,3\*

# CLOSE SHAVE (MUNDEN'S BAR) Page:1,3,5

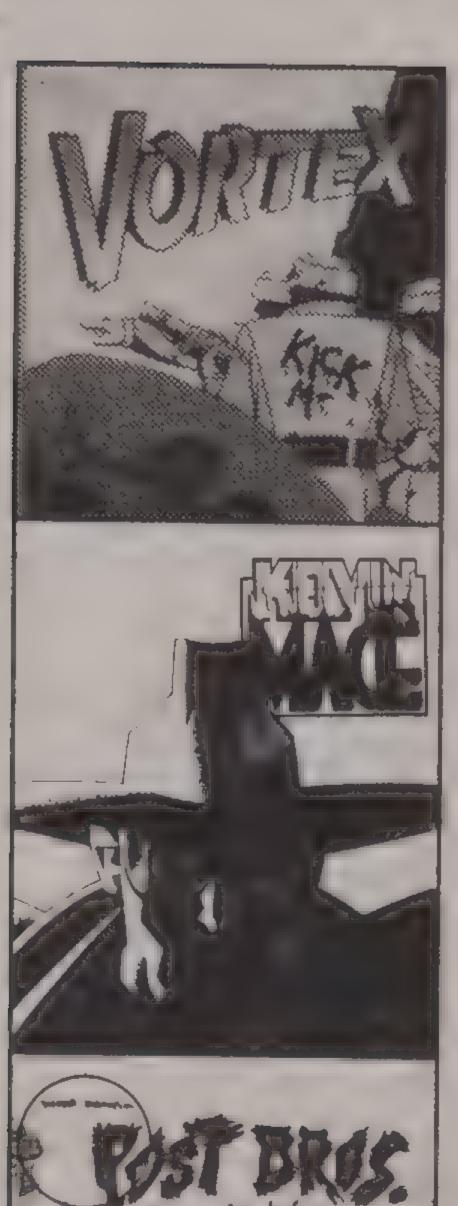
(inks by Don Lomax)

THE P.I.s #1
Pages: 3,4,5,7,8,9,10,
11,12,13,14,15,16,19,
20,24
(pencils by Joe Staton)

Some PHONY PAGES
originals are also
available (originals
may be in different
format than comic book
version). Interested
parties should inquire.

I am also willing to trade for some 3-D items (old 3-D comics, TV or movie related ViewMaster reels), certain pop music collectables (rare Elvis Costello, Kate Bush or Mari Wilson items) and original art by other cartoonists (especially looking for METAMORPHO by Ramona Fradon and THE SHADOW or BATHAN by Frank Robbins). Feel free to send me lists of art you have for trade.

# COMING FROM ONLY ONLY



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This is an advertisement, here, and we're going to do our level best to convince you (or, more properly coerce you) to buy our titles.

Now that you're properly guarded against any subtle tricks we might try we can continue on with a clear conscience.

BUY! BUY! BUY! Oh, please buy them, my mother's sick and she needs an operation, and my wife says she'll leave me if I turn out to be a failure, the bank's about to foreclose on my house, and I'm fired if this ad doesn't work! Oh, God...please!

Well, now that we've won you over to our side let's introduce you to these various comics you've agreed to purchase:

Mister X: The story of Radiant City (though corrupt and psychotic, what our future might have been) and the enigmatic characters who haunt it.

Stig's Inferno: Imagine dying and becoming ruler of Hell all before dinner. Who said Hell and damnation couldn't be fun?

Those Annoying Post Brothers: Continuing their adventures in Bugtown, Ron and Russ Post make a terrible mess wherever they go. It's Charles Manson's favorite comic. Need we say more?

Kelvin Mace: Our newest title. The tough guy's tough guy. He's one private detective who has no business being anyone's role model.

Vortex: Our flagship title continues to showcase both new and established talent in far out fantasy tales.







(NOT TRANSFERS!)

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Show your support for musical comedy by sporting this great multi-colored, gold-plated image of Neil on your person. 11/8 inches in width, it comes complete with clutch-back attachment. Only \$5.95.

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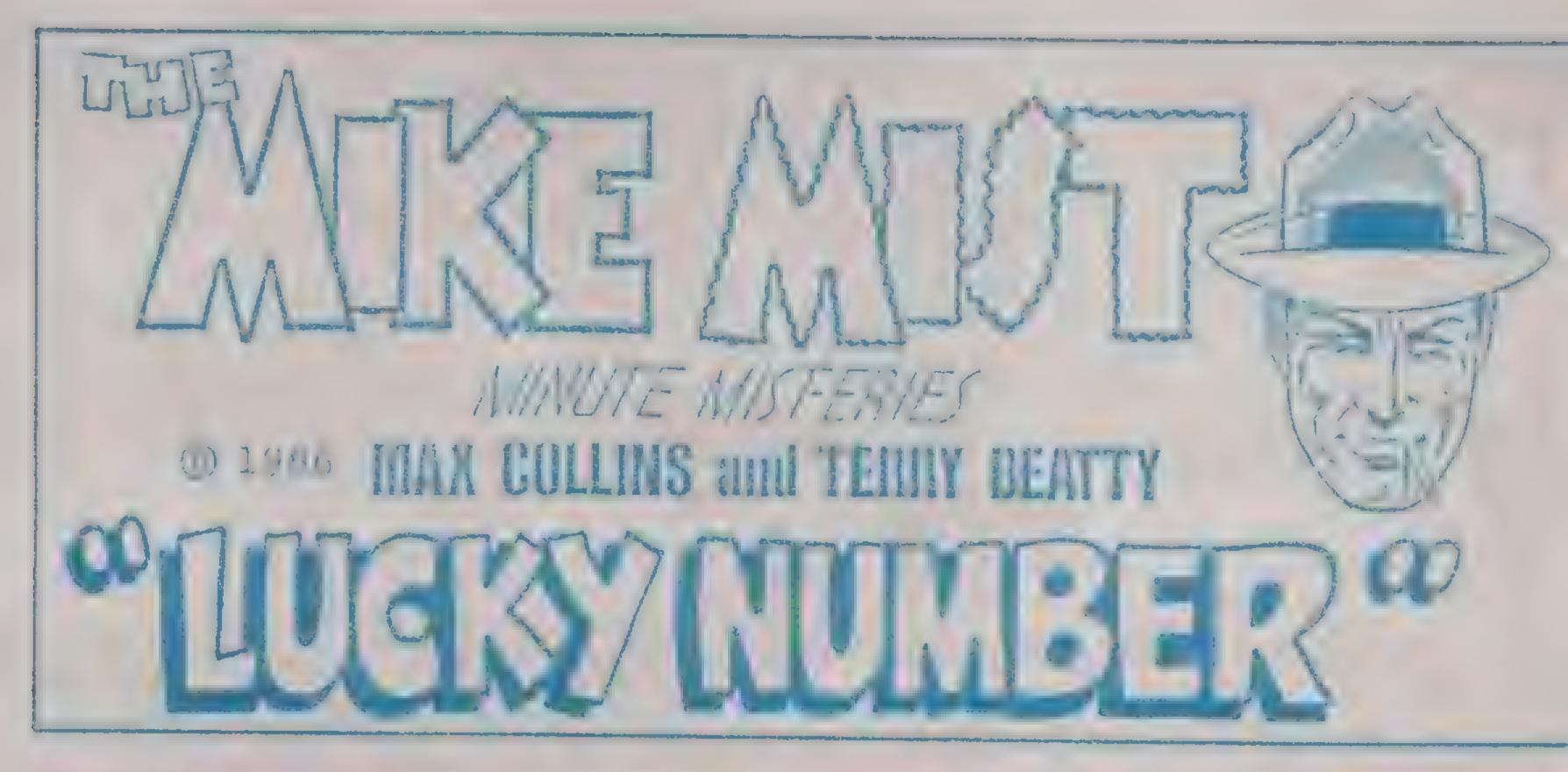


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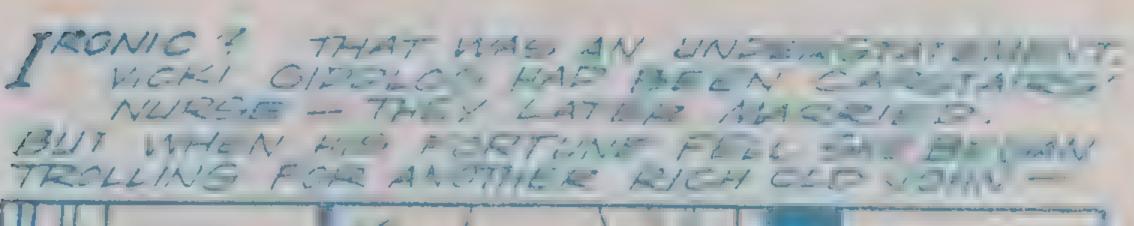
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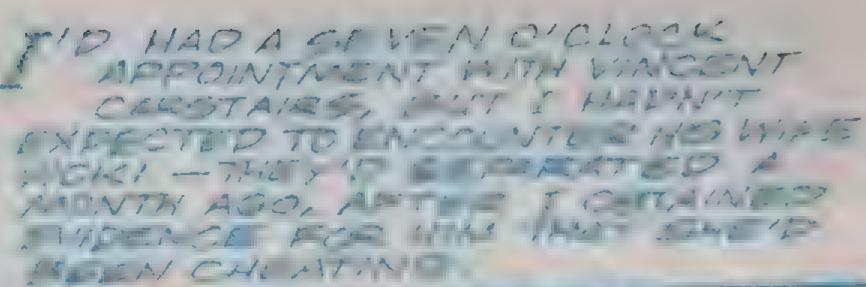






















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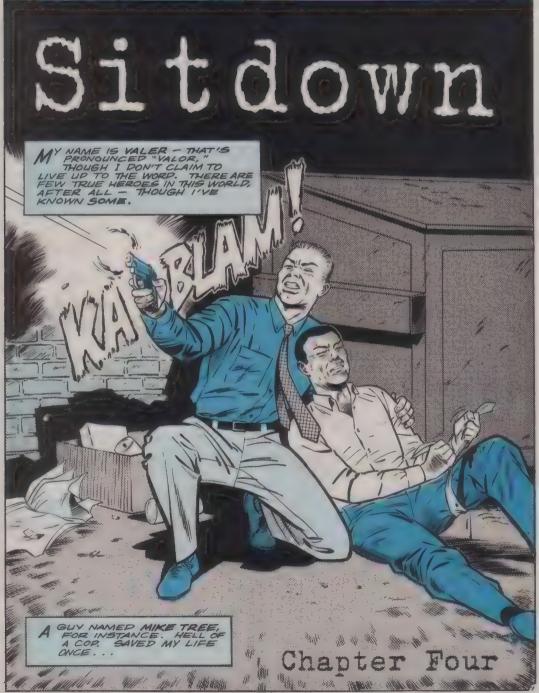
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# MATRIEE

# "THE OTHER CHEEK"

© 1986 by Max Colling and Terry Beatty



LETTERING & ART ASSIST : GARY KATE







" CHE SEEMS PRETTY SHAKEN," I SAID.

"I HAD TO CALL DIANE, FROM THE OFFICE,"
MG. TREE SAID. "EFFIE NEEDED
COMFORTING, BUT SHE DIDN'T WANT
ME TO COME NEAR HER — "





THAT'S A QUESTION YOU'12 HAVE TO ANSWER. YOU BETTER TELL ME HOW IT WENT DOWN.



SHE DID - INCLUDING
THE "MESSAGE" FROM
DOMINIQUE MUERTA.



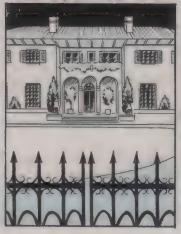
DO YOU THINK DOMINIQUE MUERTA HAS A SO-CALLED "OPEN" CONTRACT OUT ON ME?



THAT'S THE RUMOR.
SHE'S MOVED HER
BASE OF OPERATIONS
HERE, YOU KNOW, FROM
THE WEST COAST—



"SHE'S EVEN LIVING IN HER BROTHER'S MANSION, WHERE YOU USED TO DROP BY, NOW AND THEN-"



"CAN YOU ARRANGE A SITDOWN WITH HER ?" SHE ASKED.





"IF SHE CAN BE MADE TO UNDERSTAND THAT OUR WAR IS OVER - THAT I HAVE NO FURTHER GRUDGE AGAINST HER, OR HER BUSINESS, PERHAPS..."



"AND IN THE SECOND PLACE" I WENT CERN OF POLICE, A PRIVATE STIGATOR. "SHE WON'T CARE THAT YOU VIEW THE GRUDGE AS SETTLED. SHE SEES YOU AS THE MURDERER OF HER BROTHER."











" DO YOU HAVE A BETTER IDEA, RAFE ? A BETTER WAY TO STOP THE KILLING ? "

"YES - ALLOW THE POLICE TO DO THEIR JOB."



"THE ORGANIZED CRIME TASK FORCE, WORKING TO A DEGREE OFF INFORMATION YOU GATHERED AGAINST DOMINIC MUERTA, 19 INVESTIGATING THE MUERTA CRIME FAMILY - IN TIME, INDICTMENTS WILL HAPPEN - "

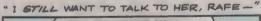


AND IN THE RESTRICT YOUR ACTIVITIES MEANTIME! RESTRICT YOUR ACTIVITIES TO THE OFFICE. ARM YOUR STAFF AND YOURGELF.

FIGHT
BACK,
YOU
MEANWES-DON'T LAUNCH YOUR
TYPICAL MS.TREE ASSAULTBUT DEFEND YOURSELF-



"I CAN PROVIDE SOME POLICE"
PROTECTION, TOO - "







WAS IT ? I'D BEEN TRYING TO MEET THIS TURKEY FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS; NOW, SUDDENLY, HE WAS PLEASED AS - PUNCH TO SEE ME...



WHEN YOU ONLY HAVE ONE HAND, YOU GET PICKY ABOUT WHAT YOU USE IT FOR.



I SEE NO REASON WHY
WE SHOULD BE NASTY
OR EVEN IMPOLITE,
MR. GREEN.



"YOU WEREN'T VERY POLITE TO YOUR GIRL FRIEND, VICKI JENKING, WERE YOU? MURDER IS ALMOST



I'D ADVISE YOU TO WATCH THAT SORT OF TALK, MR. GREEN. LIBEL, SLANDER—THAT CAN SHUT A BUGINESS DOWN.



"I'VE AVOIDED SPEAKING TO YOU, MR. GREEN, BECAUSE I PREFERRED TO SPEAK WITH YOUR EMPLOYER - WHO HAS, I UNDERSTAND, BEEN... 'INDISPOSED,' SHALL WE SAY - "



"NOW THAT SHE'S RETURNED TO THE CITY, I'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO HER — SET IT UP, MR. GREEN. I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO AN IMPERTINENT FLUNKY LIKE YOURGELF."















THE QUESTION IS,
MR. BACKER — ARE YOU
WILLING TO TESTIFY &
WE'VE READED OUR CASE
TO THE POINT WHERE WE
CAN TAKE IT TO THE
POLICE —



YOUR ALIBI FOR THE SENATOR IS GOING TO COME CRASHING UP AGAINST HALF A DOZEN RELIABLE WITNESSES WHO CAN PLACE HIM WITH THE GIRL THE NIGHT SHE DIED —





DEE'S ALWAYS BEEN A GREAT GUY — I NEVER THOUGHT HE WAS CAPABLE OF ...



"... MURDER. HE SAID HE WAS WITH HER TILL SEVEN. THEN WENT HOME. AFTER SEVEN, HE HAD NO WAY TO COVER FOR HIMSELF. "



HE SAID THE GIRL WAS
PROBABLY KILLED BY
SOME MUGGER OR
SOMETHING — HE JUST
DIDN'T WANT TO BE
CONNECTED —



SPEAKING OF "CONNECTED,"
MR. BACKER, YOUR
FRIEND THE SENATOR IS
THICK WITH MOBSTERS—
WE CAN PROVE THAT,
TOO.



PON'T YOU THINK I KNOW THAT?
WE ALL HAVE TO SWIM IN THE
SAME WATER, MR. FREEMONT —
THE GAME LOUSY, POLLUTED WATERBUSINESS, AS THEY GAY, IS BUSINESS.

INCLUDING
MURDER?

MURDER?

















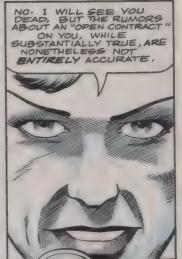


















TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE-

down and read a good mystery yarn. I don't know why the crime-detective genre has been so neglected by comics of late. Your book proves this genre has the potential to be very entertaining. You've probably noticed the House of (lame) Ideas has put out its own book featuring a female private eve. Although both series are different, I firmly believe this new one would not have come about if Ms. Tree had not gone first. Your success has not gone unnoticed. Actually, it might be kind of nice for mystery fans if all the publishers started putting out detective books. Yours would be a standard of quality no matter what.

About Ms. Tree's violent nature, heck; she's only doing what I wish the Batman would sometimes. Don't get me wrong here, I'm an advocate of nonviolence. This is a comic book. however, and it actually acts as a sort of catharsis. There's so much for people to be angry about in our society today. Better to read about Ms. Tree blowing criminals away than to do it yourself. Also, the reader can sympathize with the character. She's been through hell because of criminals and actually believes what she's doing is right.

One of my favorite things about mystery fiction is the fantasy element. With any good story, I think fantasy plays a big part. Mysteries, in their way, are no exception. I mean, it takes some make-believe for a sleuth to solve a crime from a twisted mass of miniscule clues - and every time! Perhaps this is what the private eye aspect of the genre was getting away from. Nevertheless, I think the fantasy element is still there. At any rate, in a book grounded in reality like Ms. Tree, it takes some skill to weave this in. You do it well, Max. Ms. Tree's stories are great adventures, but never seem contrived. The character herself is very real. She's a wonderful mix of sensuality. tenderness and harshness. And boy can she bitch!

On the subject of Ms. Tree tackling society's problems: A while back I saw a picture in the newspaper of a satan worshiper who had killed several people in the name of his religion. He was flashing to the ever obliging press a pentagram inscribed on his hand. It chilled me to the bone. I think this bizarre sort of thing could crop up in Ms. Tree. Maybe should. She sure gets the dregs, doesn't she?

A few parting comments, I love the art. That's all I feel qualified to say, not being an artist. I love the duotone. Red and blue are best. Pleecease don't give us another string of sepia issues: I didn't even like the first one. By the way, your letter column is one of the best around. You actually take time to respond to the readers. It's a dialogue, and that's what a letter column should be.

Gary Hautaluoma, FT. COLLINS, CO

A murdering Satan worshipper seems like a good foe for our girl; if we do that story, Gary, we'll dedicate it to you. Thanks for picking up on the fantasy element of MS. TREE. I haven't said it lately, but here goes: "It's just a story." And by that I mean (as I've said so often) that while we are, to a degree, more "reality-based" than other comic books, we are a melodrame a larger-than-life fantasy set in modern times. The private eye of popular fiction is as much a fantasy figure as the superhero he just dresses less ridiculously.

### Dear Max and Terry.

"Heroine Withdrawal" is a very good character study and a reasonably accurate portrayal of psychiatry, clinical psychology, and mental illness. It is probably the best detective story I've seen that was set in a psychiatric hospital, although that does not do it justice, since most (fictional) books, movies, and TV shows dealing with the subject have been exploitative crap. The only other really good story of this type that I've seen was an episode of HARRY O several years ago. That episode used the more common plot device of the hero posing as a patient to go undercover and get evidence. MS. TREE #26 is the first case I know of a comic hero being admitted for real.

i am also glad to see that you've avoided most of the cliches and stereotypes of this type of story - e.g., the patient dressed like Napoleon, the Nazi-like, German accented shrink torturing patients with electric shocks, etc. (There probably have been cases of ECT being used to control or punish patients in real life, but nowhere near as often as in movies.) As Michael is learning, many "lunatics" (as she called them) look normal on the surface, and you don't realize there is anything wrong until you talk with them - and even then, it may take time for you to notice the flight ideas, word salad, ideas of reference, or other symptoms. These must be hard to depict in a story; the incoherence and tangential conversation of the characters could easily be mistaken for sloppy writing

Did Dr. Unger suggest the diagnosis of "schizoid" for Michael? Admittedly, I haven't worked in psych in a few years now, but the last I heard, schizoids were usually described as shy, overly sensitive, and "unable to express hostility and ordinary aggressive feelings." That doesn't sound like Ms. Tree! If she has a disorder at all, it would probably be obsessivecompulsive neurosis. But then, I'm no doctor.

Dr. Syke's attitude is typical of many clinical psychologists; if they had their way, every man, woman, and child on earth would be a clone of Mr. Rogers - or at least Alan Alda. The traits Dr. Syke lists on page 9 of chapter one are not symptoms but personal characteristics - and whether they are good or bad is a matter of opinion. Many psychologists act as if hypochondriacs, exhibitionists, and hysterical personalities are healthier than everyone else. Actually, many competent and successful people, being self-reliant, probably are somewhat aloof. But shrinks, especially in private practice, have a vested interest in discouraging self-reliance and encouraging emotional dependence.

I see the controversy over Billy Bob's "homosexuality" still continues. Actually, he wasn't a homosexual, at least not in the usual sense; pedophilia may involve heterosexual or homosexual behavior. I suspect you chose to use the latter mainly so that Mike Jr. could be a potential victim, thereby involving Ms. Tree in the case. Besides, as Robin Banks rightly noted, the story wasn't really about sexual preference but violent crime. Murder, rape, kidnapping, and child molesting are illegal and immoral whether the perpetrator is Billy Bob or Anita Bryant. The harm done to the victim is the real problem, not the "perversion" or "immorality."

Speaking of "Runaway," I've realized it may have been a little unfair to say that Harwood "stood idly by" in the climax of #17 More accurately, he tried and failed to warn Michael, then tried - and failed again - to talk her out of executing Billy Bob. But the end result is the same either way. I am not impressed by good intentions alone, and tend to base my opinions on what

people actually do.

Whether problems are "black and white" or complex, they are not solved by rationalization, excuses ("I ran to warn you but -"), or speculating on what one "would have" done if things had only been different. While some analysis may be necessary to determine the right course of action, problems are ultimately solved not by talking about what needs to be done, but by doing what needs to be done

Before you can debate whether a criminal "needs help" or "deserves punishment," you have to have him in custody. Until then, such questions are academic, theoretical, and irrelevant. But Harwood made no effort to capture Billy Bob, preferring to stay on the sidelines and let Michael do the dirty work

In all fairness, though, I don't think the story could have been written much differently. You could have used Roger Freemont or Capt. Beemis in Harwood's place. Either could serve as a "voice of reason" to balance her extremism. But with Roger, the issue would be logic vs. emotion, and with Beemis, law and order vs. vigilantism. To portray compassion vs. vengefulness, a "bleeding heart" was needed. And he had to be passive, or ineffectual, because for him to intervene would change the whole ending. (Actually, his failure to help Ms. Tree was realistic, judging by my own experience. I suspect anyone who admires "the Glenn Harwoods of the world" has never had to depend on one in an emergency - especially facing someone like Billy Bob.)

I suggest that violent crime is a "black and white" problem from the viewpoint of its victims (who, after all, are not to blame for psychopathy, "nightmare childhoods," et. al.). A person being mugged, raped, or robbed is already "in deep trouble." That mugger, rapist, or robber is almost certainly a repeat offender with a long arrest record, and is back out on the streets partly because the Glenn Harwoods of the world decided that it would not be "compassionate" to keep him con-

Judging by the lettercol, Michael was right when she said her views on abortion wouldn't endear her to either side. Her position did sound a little like a political candidate taking both sides of the issue

Speaking of issues, you've avoided debate over the insanity defense by avoiding a trial, but I can't resist commenting anyway. In my not-so-humble opinion, "NGRI" should be abolished, and "sanity" should not be an issue in criminal law. If the goal is to rehabilitate the person, he must be taught responsibility, which includes punishment for wrongful behavior. And all crime is deviant and seemingly irrational, so once you accept that "insanity" excuses crime, where does it stop? Any offense, from jaywalking to murder, could theoretically be excused with "only an insane person would ever do such a thing." Besides, the insanity defense is seldom used, and almost never successfully

That doesn't mean that laws should be inflexible, or that no one can be given a break; just that exceptions should be based on extenuating circumstances, not "insanity." It works both ways; I think that someone like Ms. Tree (or Francine Hughes) should be let off the hook without the stigma of "insanity."

To answer David Malcolm Porta: I don't think society should condone or condemn "immoral behavior." I don't think that immorality alone is reason enough to outlaw something. And morality is an abstract concept, as is justice. These terms mean different things to conservatives, liberals, libertarians, athiests, Christians, et. al. So I think man—made laws should be concerned with secular, practical things-public safety, social order, supressing crime—and not with abstract and arbitrary ideas of enforcing "morality." (God can enforce His own laws without help from man.)

Book recommendations: Joseph Wambaugh's novels are not exactly mysteries or even straight police-procedurals, but they are very good. My favorites are THE BLACK MARBLE and THE GLITTER DOME. Also, Donald Hamilton's Matt Helm series might appeal to Micky Spillane fans. (The Dean Martin movies had even less in common with Hamilton's novels than the Stacy Keach TV show had in common with the real Mike Hammer.) And for a non-fiction study of criminals. I highly recommend Dr. Stanton Samenow's INSIDE THE CRIMINAL MIND. It combines clinical psychology with common sense, a rare combination.

By the way, I recently saw the I, THE JURY remake on TV and thought that Armand Assante made an adequate Hammer and Barbera Carrera a good villainess. But the real stand-out was Laurene Landon. This was the best portrayal of Velda ever in a movie or TV show. Of course, she had the advantage of a script that did justice to the character; other film versions have made Velda a typical desk-bound secretary or damsel in distress. With the right scripting, perhaps Lindsey Bloom could have played the part correctly (that is, faithful to Spillane's original version, a pistol-packing tough cookie.) That is not to belittle Landon's performance, though; she was great.

# Tom Crunkleton, ATLANTA, GA

Your long and thoughtful letter requires little comment, Tom, but let me at least add my second-that-emotion to what you say about Laurene Landon as Velda. But I also like Armand Assante as Hammer and find him far better than just adequate - I think he's the best screen Hammer after Mickey himself. My championing of the I, THE JURY remake is controversial, however; my delense of the lilm (which takes up almost a full chapter of my Spillane study, ONE LONELY KNIGHT, co-authored with James Traylor) has been attacked from time to time. For the record, though, KISS ME DEADLY remains the best Spillane-related film (and Ralph Meeker's portrayal of Hammer is definitive in its way - but that Hammer is so unlike Mickey's that I don't even consider him a screen Mike Hammer, strictly speaking).

Dear Max and Terry,

Once again, reading Ms. Tree's experiences in the psychiatric hospital was a rather harrowing experience. I oscillated between siding with her or the doctors, and in the end I decided that human beings are very complex (ie. — I haven't quite made up my mind yet). Are the doctors twisting the evidence to show her mentally unfit or is there perhaps at least a grain of truth in their assertions? Or, intriguingly enough, is it the case that anyone put under such examination would show at least eome signs of "maladjustment"? (To put it bluntly, are we all maybe just a little bit crazy? I know, I know. "Speak for yourself, Maple!") I tend to think that there are some things wrong with Ms. Tree, but whether they are as severe or so greatly manifested as the doctors suggest, I'm not sure. (Still, when her death toll rises, you've got to look for some explanation.)

One thing I've learned from the recent issues is that I'm going to try my very best not to get myself into a prison or a hospital in the United States. After all, from Michael's experiences, they're pretty much staffed by professional killers. And Max, if you have any stories about axemurderers/night-clerks at Holiday Inns I don't want to hear

about it! (And, by the way, none of the preceeding should be taken to imply that I want to enter a prison or hospital in Canada).

From #27's lettercol, it would appear that you could do a land office business in "DIE! DIE! DIE!" T-shirts if you wanted

T.M. Maple, WESTON, ONT.

Some of our readers, T.M., are trying to read things into "Heroine Withdrawal," by assuming it's another of our "issue-oriented" issues. We aren't trying to make a statement about mental illness and its treatment; we're trying to make a statement about a specific character in a ficitonal story.

Dear Max.

I've enclosed a copy of an article from my book series in this year's **Ambrose Magazine**, hopefully with all the typos and rewritten lines corrected. I'm a 35-year old senior English major here at S.A.C. and rather than review films that have already left town, I chose to review contemporary genre fiction. Review probably isn't the right word, since I've only reported on books I enjoy rather than run down those I dislike.

Your Heller novels come at the end of my list which started with Stephen and Tabitha King (at the end only because I had to wait for The Million-Dollar Wound). Greg McDonald, Joe Haldeman, Ian Shoales, Dick Francis, Doug Adams, Bob Asprin, Ray Bradbury, James Herbert, Ramsey Campbell, Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, and David Morrell followed, so you can see the company you kept.

I've received some strange responses from faculty and students, including an admission from a British lit prof that he tried to read a Danielle Steele novel over break. God only knows what they will say when they see my year-ending two-parter on comics, where **Ms. Tree** will see another mention.

John Judge, DAVENPORT, IA

Thanks for the review, John, and the mention in it of MS. TREE. More and more readers of my novels seem to be finding their way to this comic book, despite the prejudice against comics by many mystery fans (and some mystery bookstore managers).

Dear Max.

Until recently, I thought of Ms. Tree as having a sound mind. Although her actions have been a tad harsh. I felt she knew what she was doing and what she was getting involved in. Up until issue 27, I cannot say that I have ever disagreed with any of her actions. I realize that what she has done has gotten some of the readers a little upset, but I had sympathized with her all of the way

In issue 27, we saw a slight change of character. Ms. Tree said three sentences, and with these three sentences, my whole image of her left. She realizes that the only way for her to leave the institution that she is in is to lighten up on this crime stuff, and to come back to the real world. She has to realize that she must leave her past behind her and that the only way for her to get out of the place she is in is by playing by the doctor's rules.

"Family" doctor? What "family" is that? Muerta?" With those three small sentences, we saw a totally different side of Michael. It's unlike her to obsess herself so much with her work. Sure, she has talked about her past and her husbands time and again, but never to the degree in this story. All I can do is warn you guys to keep your distance and stay on her good side.

Why have Ms. Tree's boobs been getting bigger in the last couple of issues?

# Chris Romano, PACIFIC PALISADES, CA

Frankly, Chris, Ms. Tree has always been obsessed with her work and with finding her dead husband's killers. But you are right in singling out those three sentences as an indication that she had, indeed, begun to go around the bend. As for Ms. Tree's "boobs" (we would prefer you use terminology more dignified, like "mammary glands" or "hooters"), the reason for their increase must be that starchy institutional food. Either that, or it may mean Terry has been chained to his drawing board and is very, very lonely....

# Comics Buyer's Guide Fan Awards for 1985

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# Renegade releases JULY





# STRATA No. 4

written by: Joe Judt pencilled by: Ray Murtaugh inked by: Jim Brozman

All swashbuckling issue. Flambeau's commando team runs wild in the Iron City in a futile (but funny) attempt to avoid capture. There's romance, too.

# DITKO'S WORLD featuring STATIC No. 3 of 3

editor: Robin Snyder story & artwork: Steve Ditko

Ditko returns with his "hero for all peoples" The Question in a story entitled "My Son." Also this issue. Static appears in "The Polluter" and an allnew Science Fiction story "The Helmet." The heads come back again to continue their debate on justice. Only the genius of Steve Ditko could bring you all of this in one book! This is the final issue of the three issue mini-series "Static-Ditko's World." Be sure to watch for Ditko's new series, "Ditko's World," premiering this fall from Renegade Press.





# MATREE

Ms. Tree No. 31 written by: Max Collins drawn by: Terry Beatty, with assistance by Gary Kato

# "THE OTHER CHEEK "concludes.

It's back to "normal" as Ms. Tree throws her psychiatric cure down the Jrain and picks up her gun to avenge the death of an innocent. SILENT INVASION No. 3 written by: Larry Hancock drawn by: Micheal Cherkas

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